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Ho et al.

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(54) **METHOD AND SYSTEM FOR TELEVISION CHANNEL GROUP**

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H04N 21/426 (2011.01)
H04N 21/61 (2011.01)
H04N 21/432 (2011.01)
H04N 21/433 (2011.01)
H04N 1/00 (2006.01)

(52) **U.S. Cl.**
CPC **H04N 21/4622** (2013.01); **H04N 21/4263** (2013.01); **H04N 21/4325** (2013.01); **H04N 21/4332** (2013.01); **H04N 21/6125** (2013.01); **H04N 1/00442** (2013.01)

(58) **Field of Classification Search**

CPC H04N 1/00442
See application file for complete search history.

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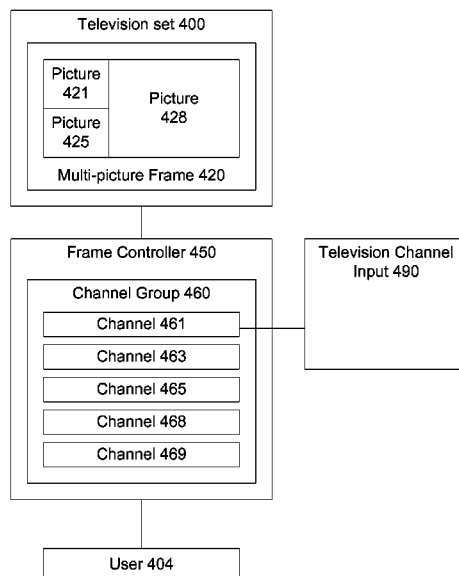
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(57) **ABSTRACT**

Provided is a method and system for displaying video from a plurality of video streams on a display. It includes an input interface for receiving video data from a plurality of video streams and transferring the video data to a frame controller in communication with a television display. The frame controller causes the video data from each of the plurality of different video streams to be displayed in a separate frame on the television display, and each frame occupying an area of the television display separate from an area occupied by any other frame. The frame controller displays a channel group on the television display. The channel group comprises a list of channels sharing at least one common attribute.

24 Claims, 14 Drawing Sheets



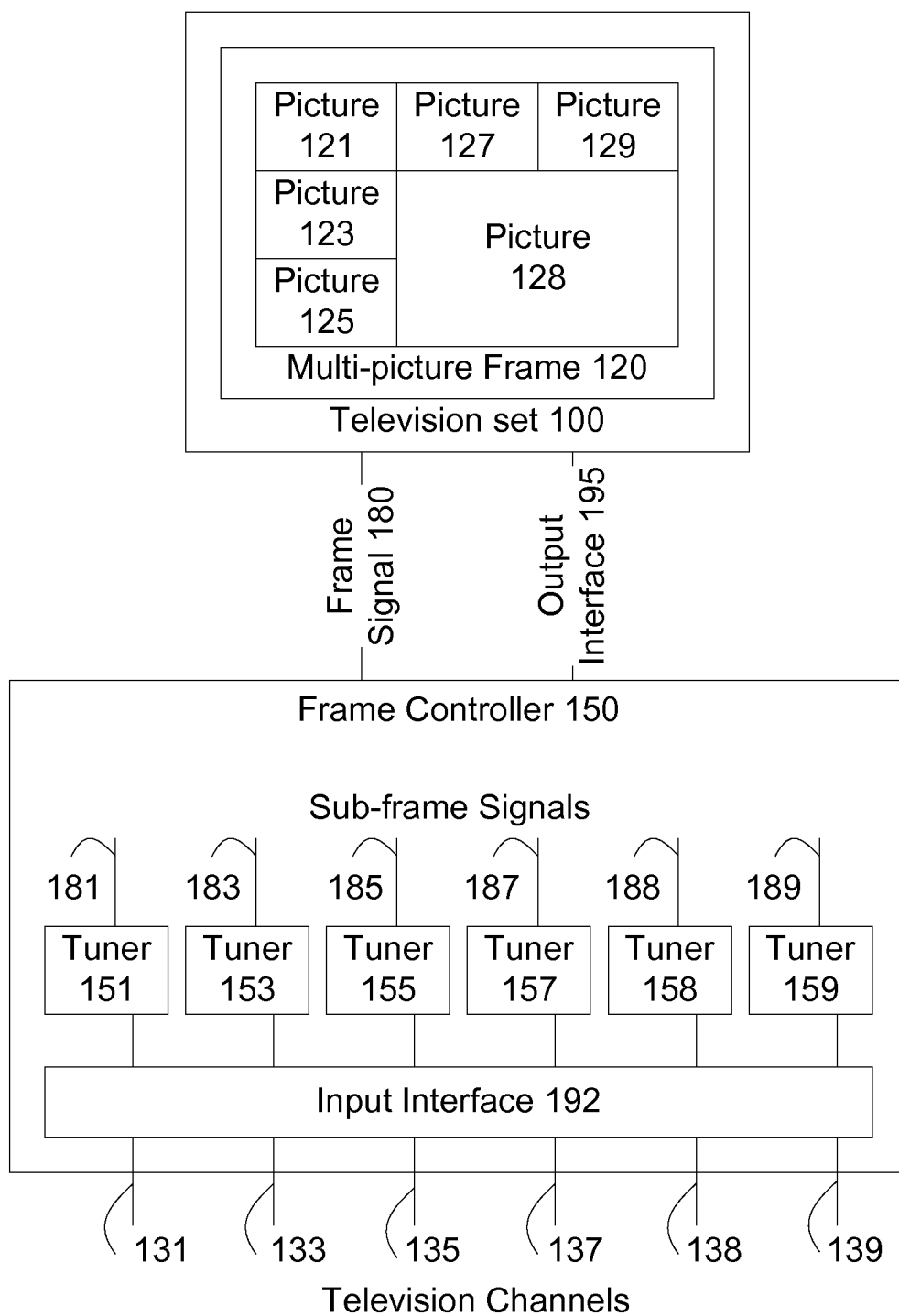


Figure 1

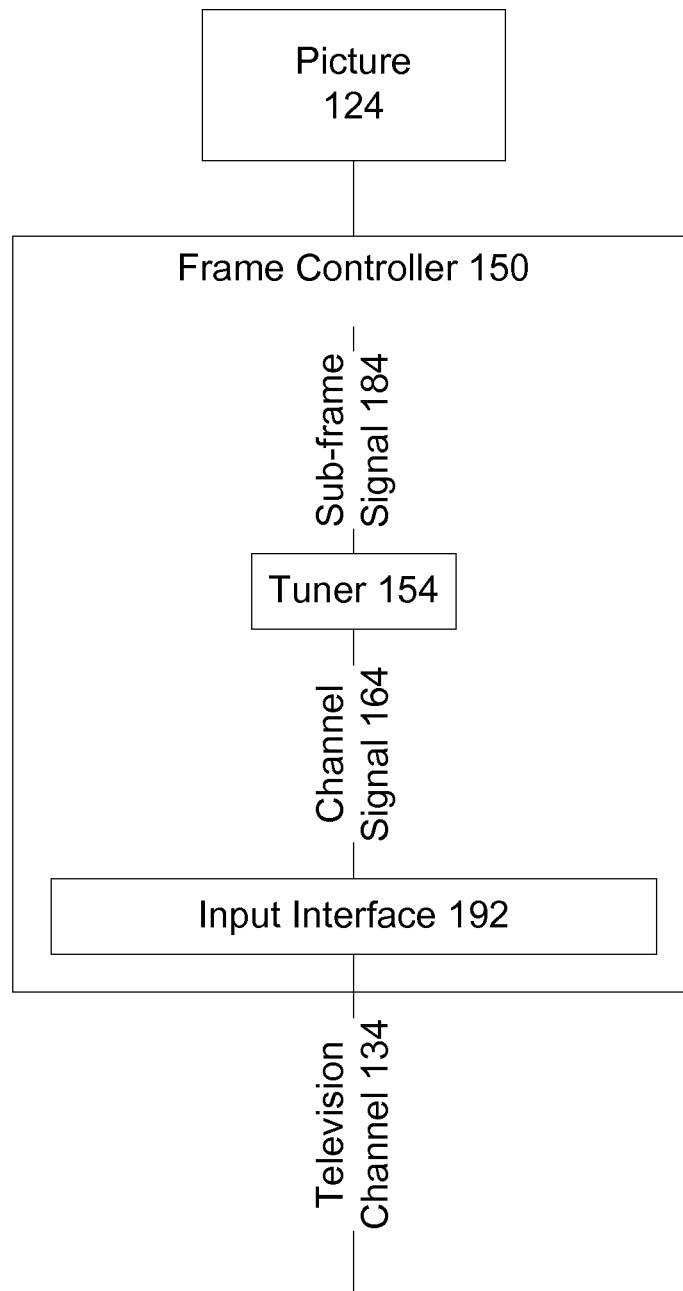


Figure 1a

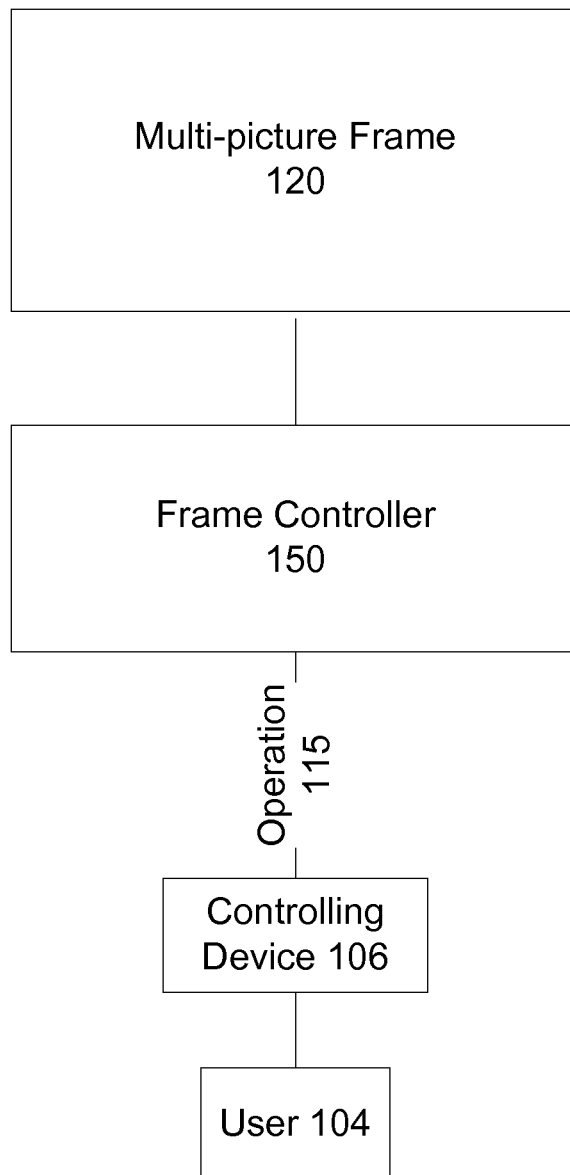


Figure 2

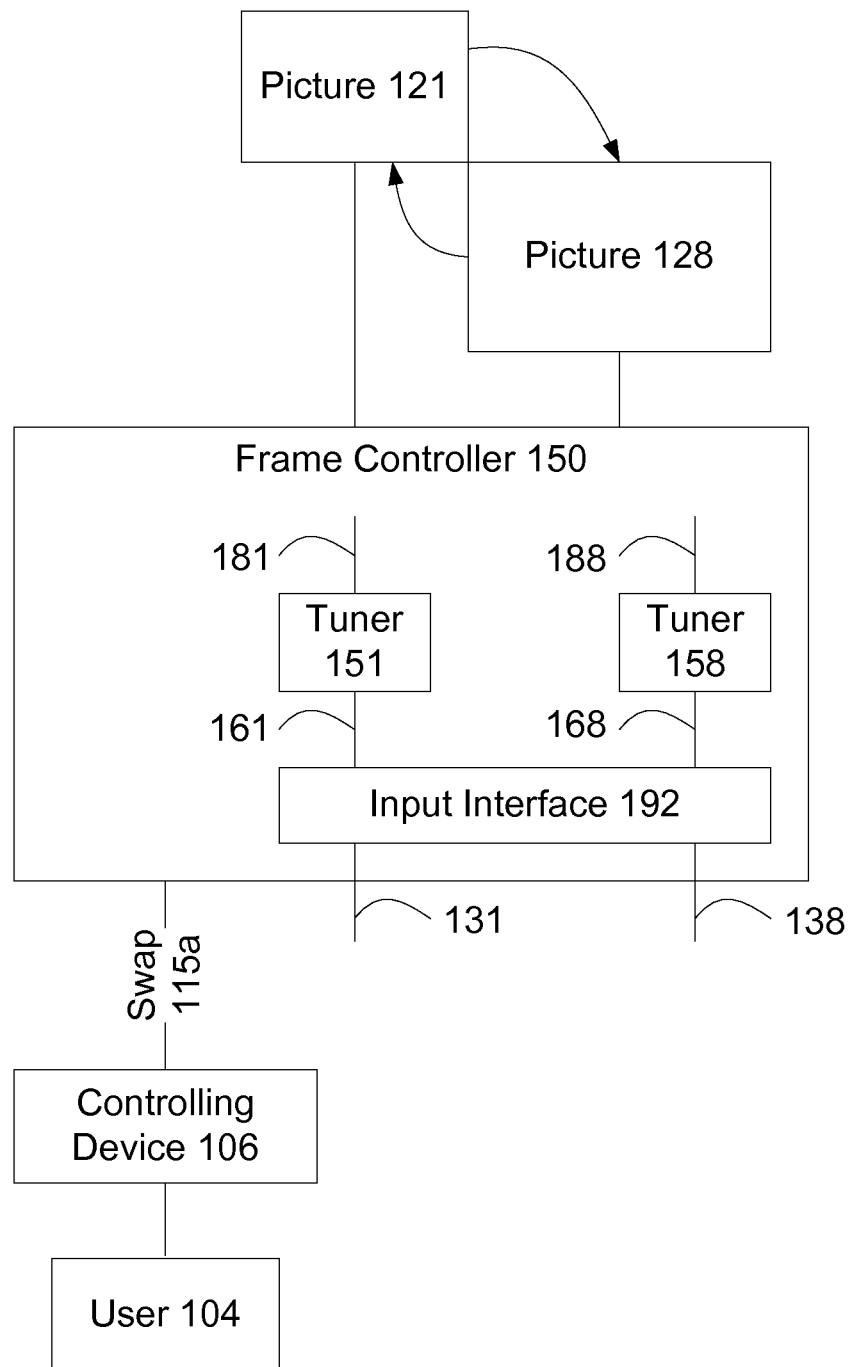


Figure 2a

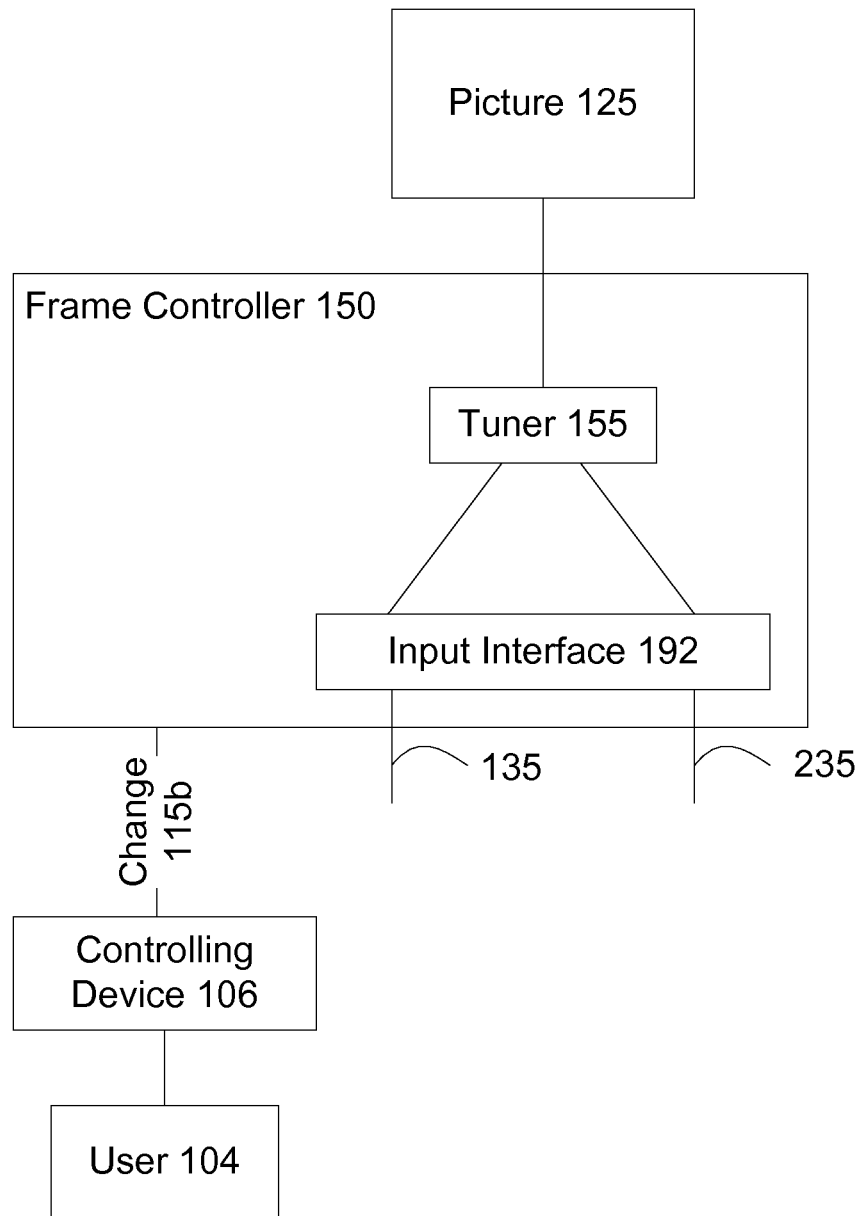


Figure 2b

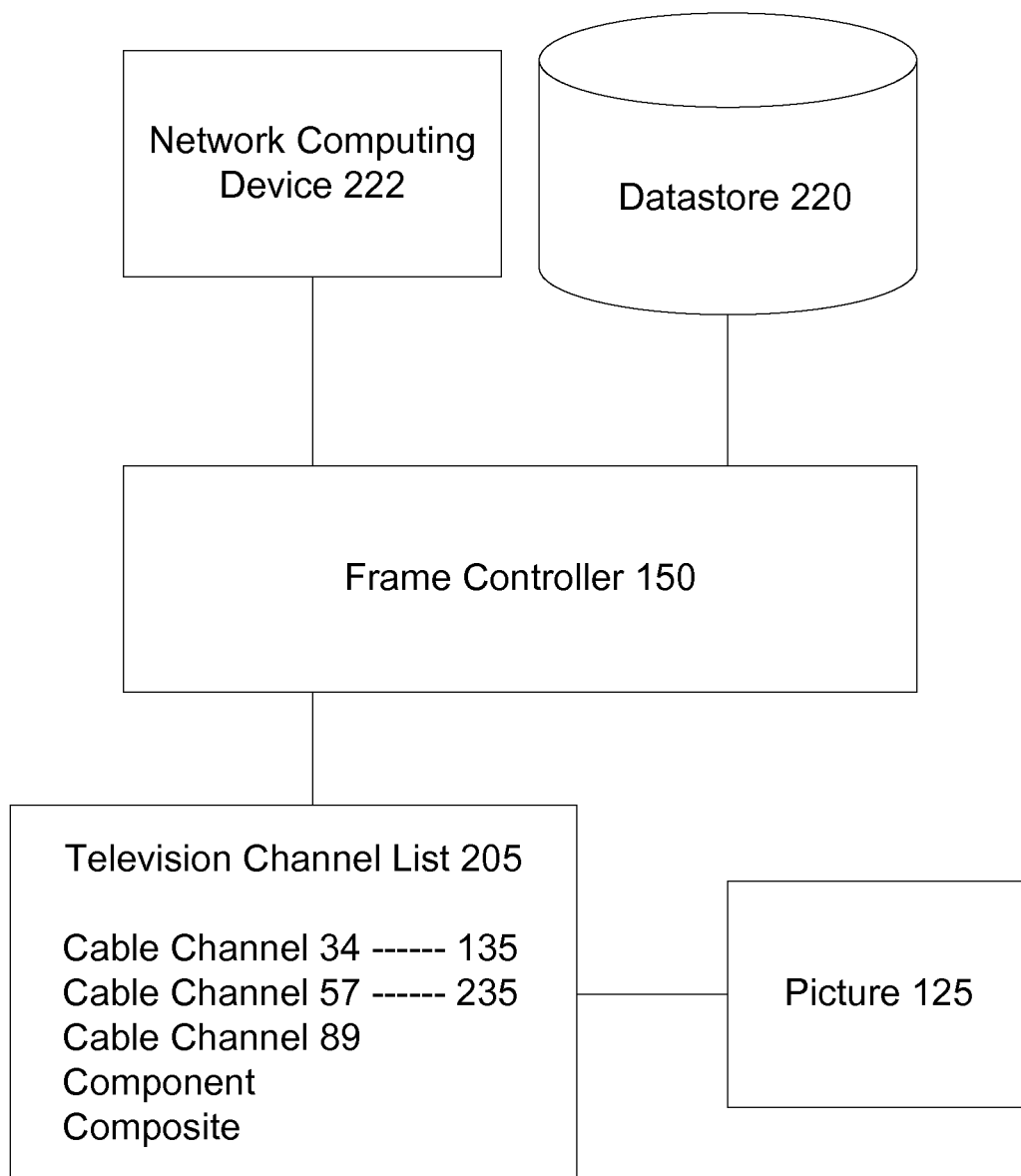


Figure 3a

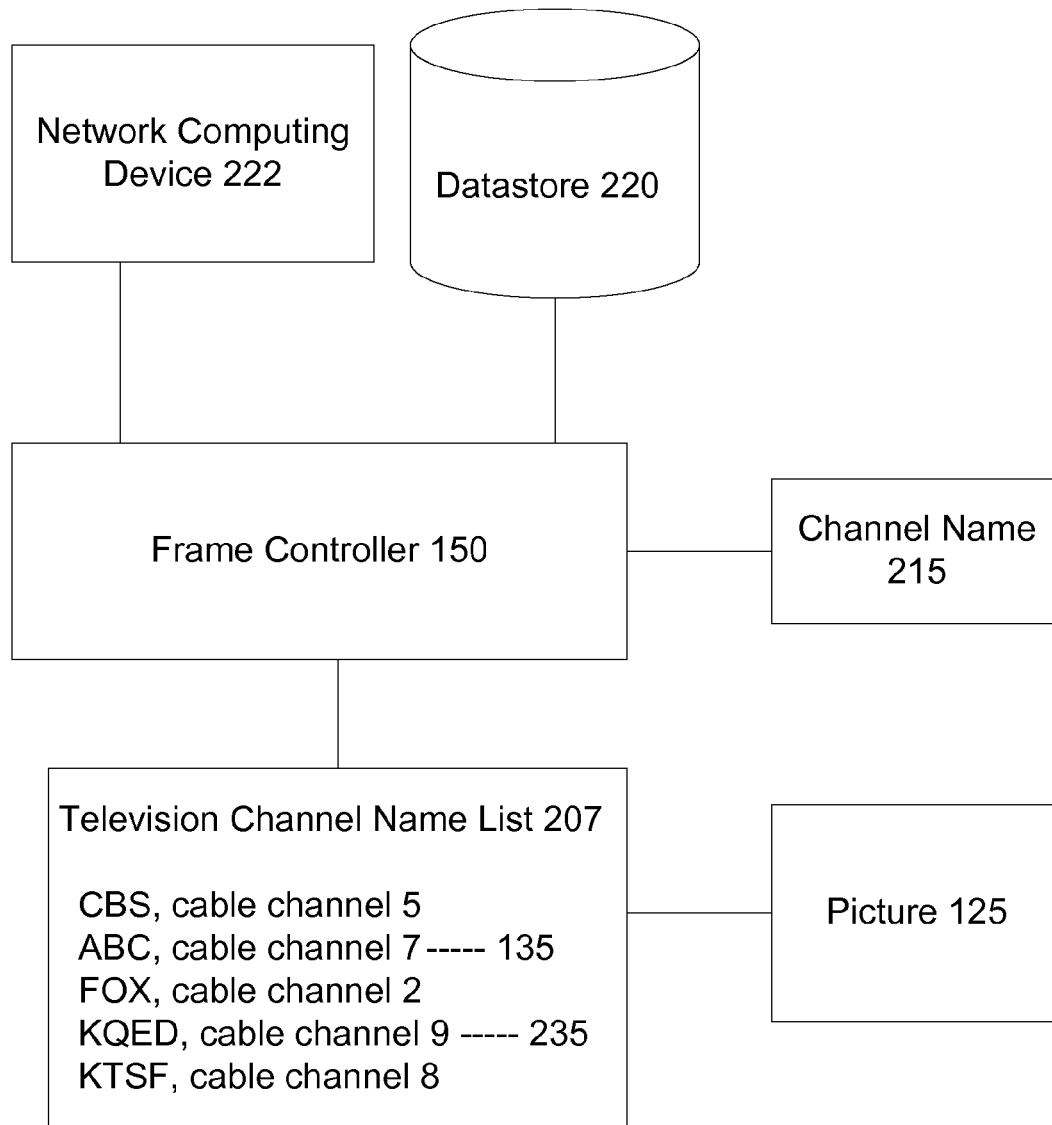


Figure 3b

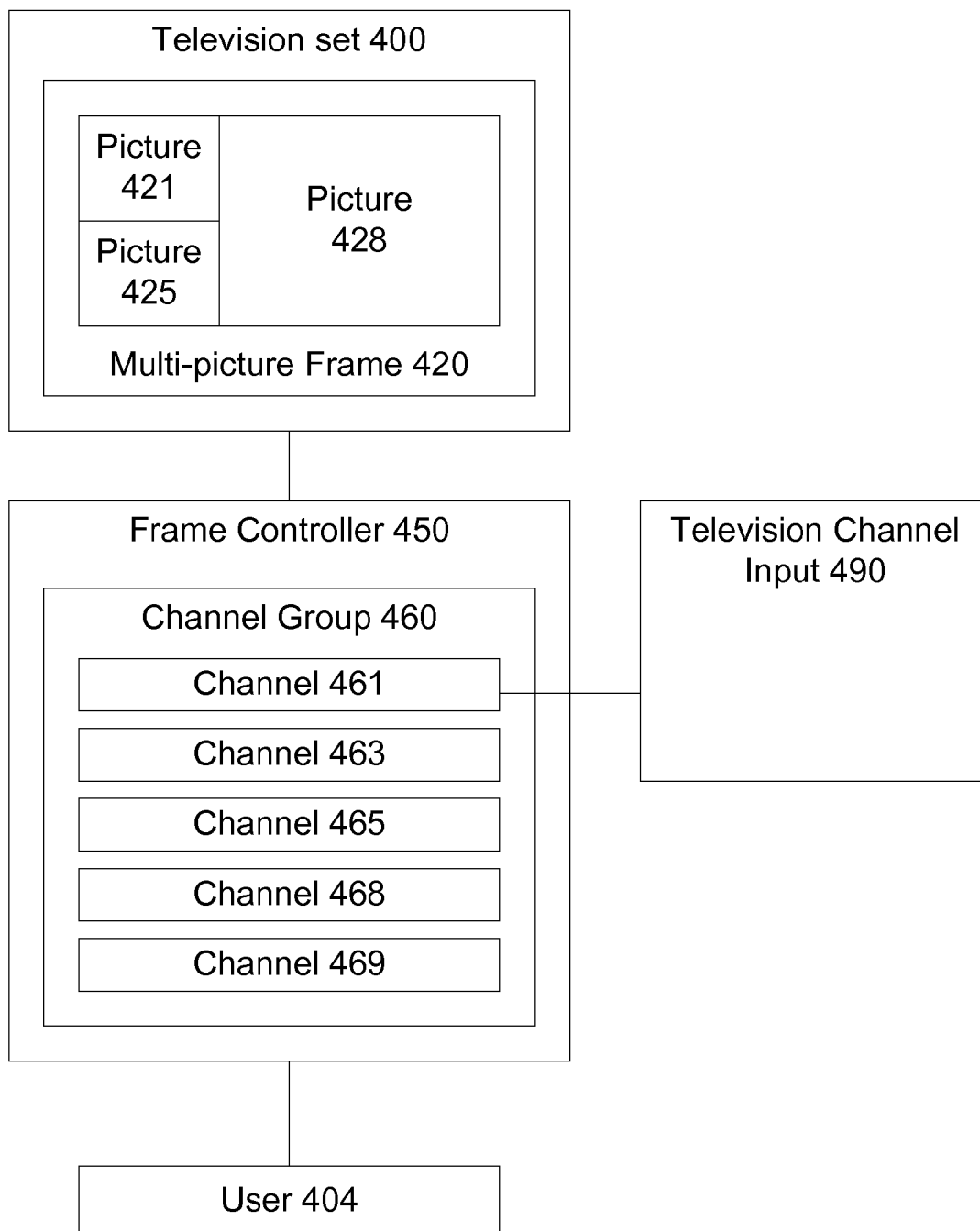


Figure 4

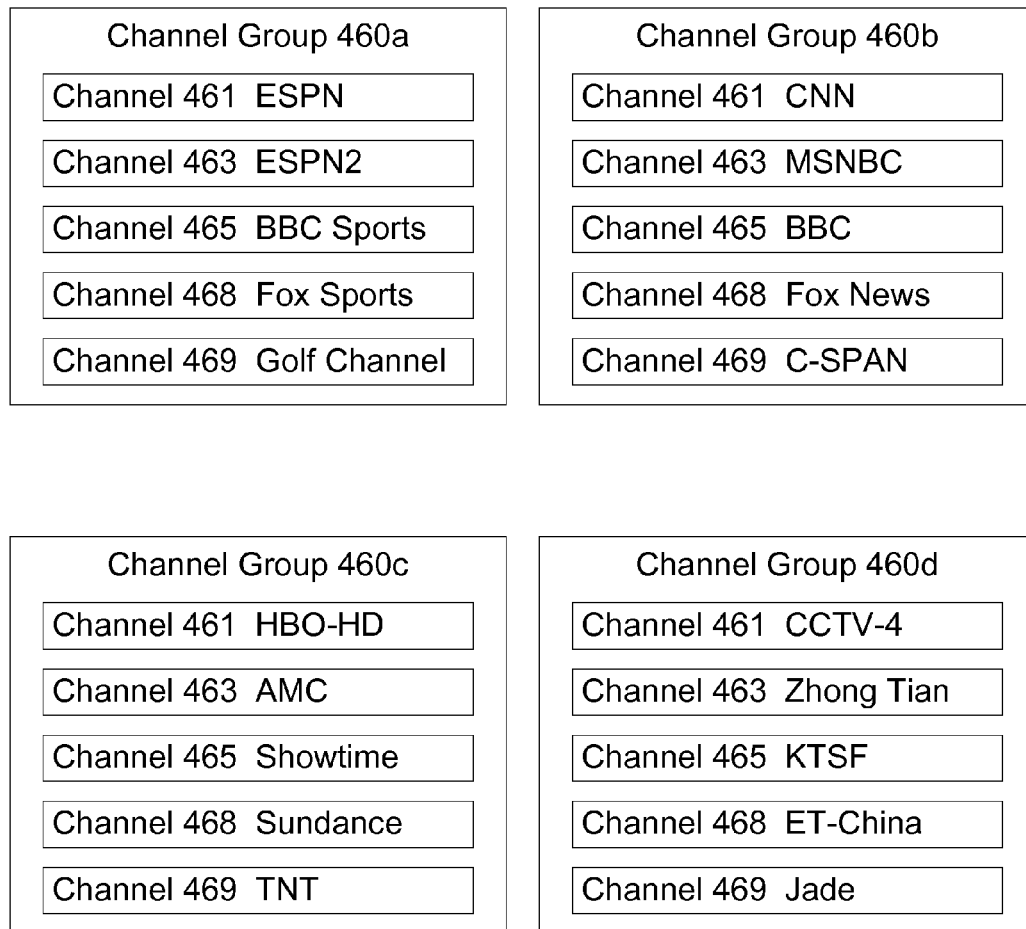


Figure 5a

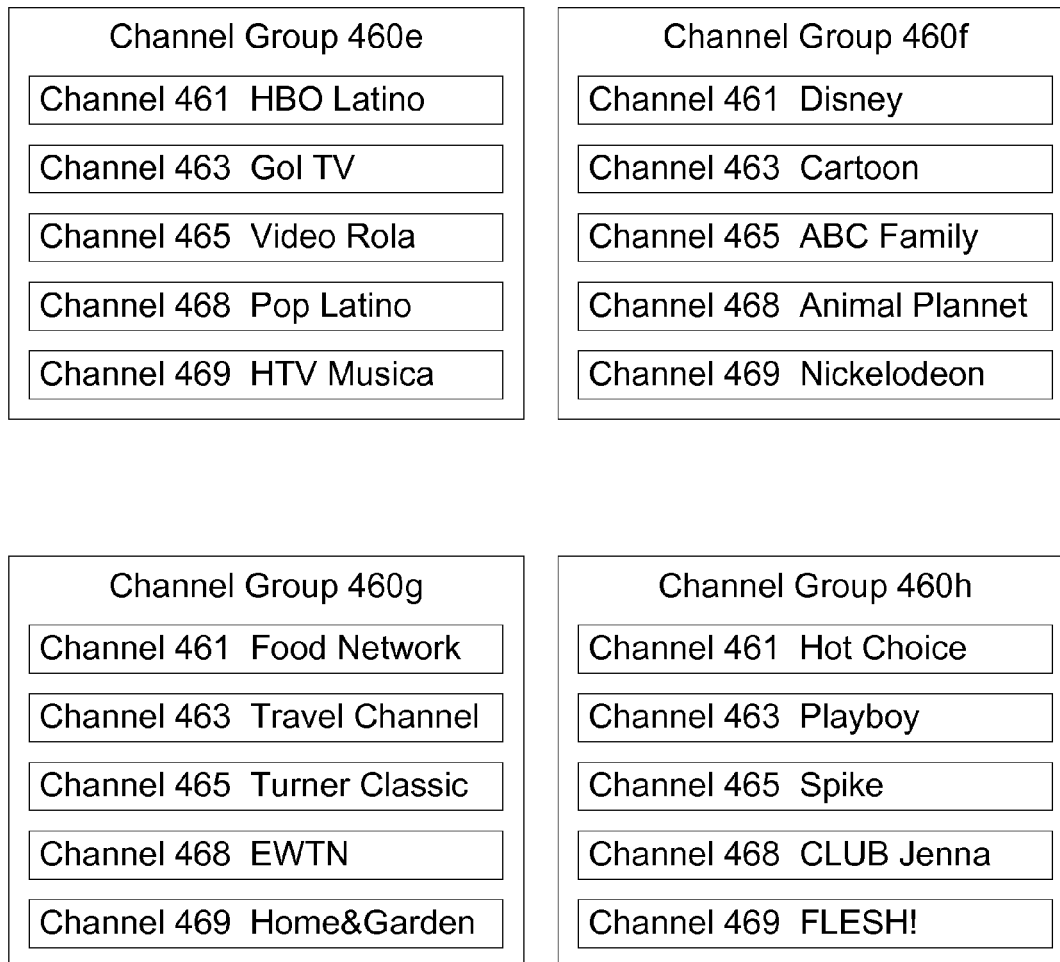


Figure 5b

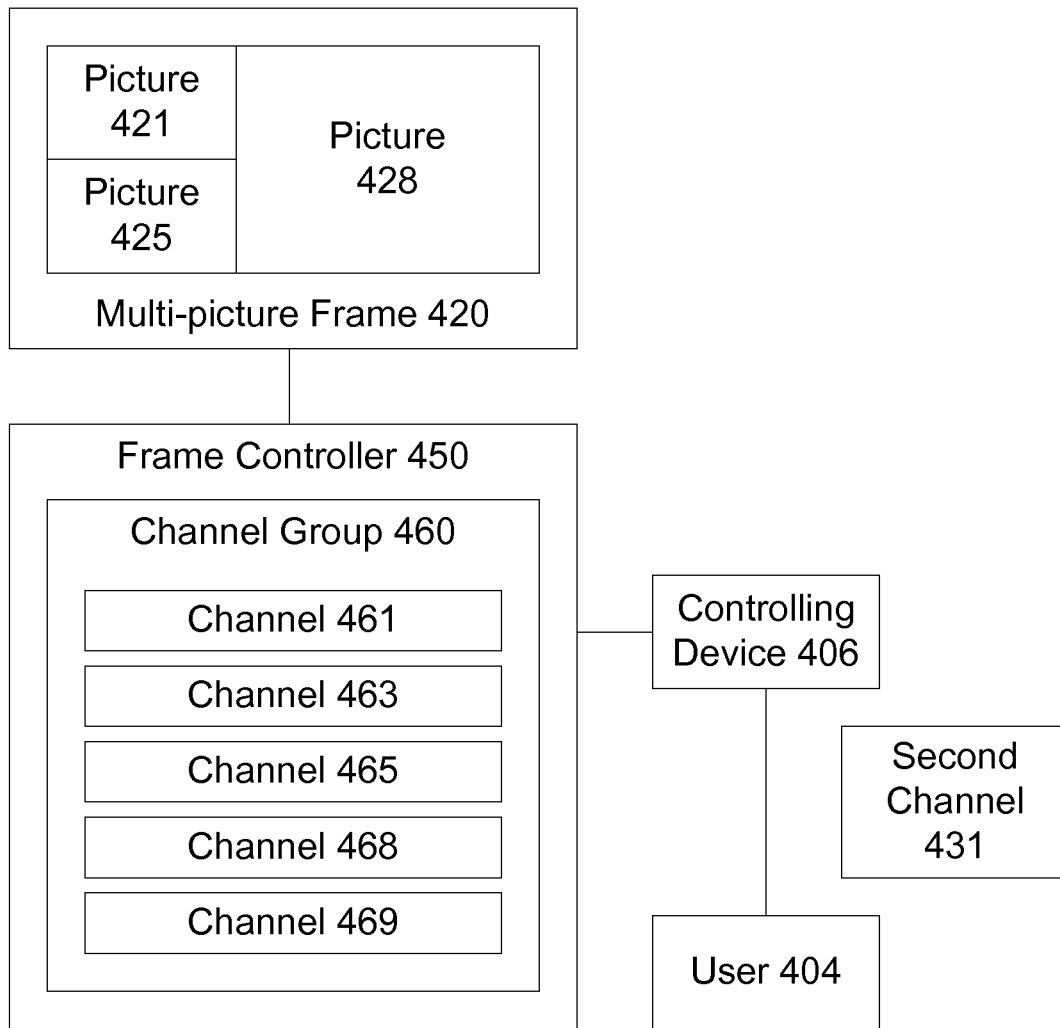


Figure 6

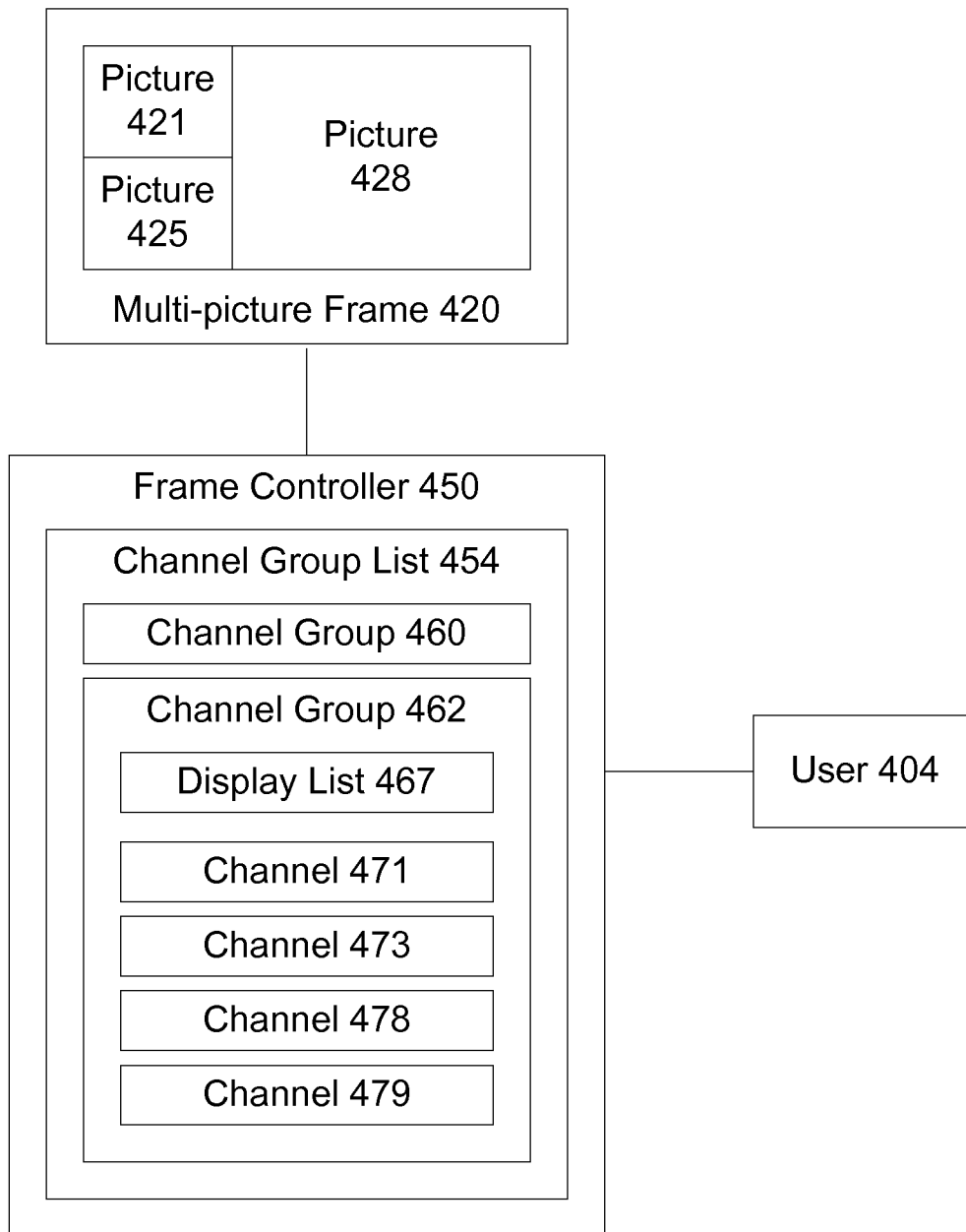


Figure 7

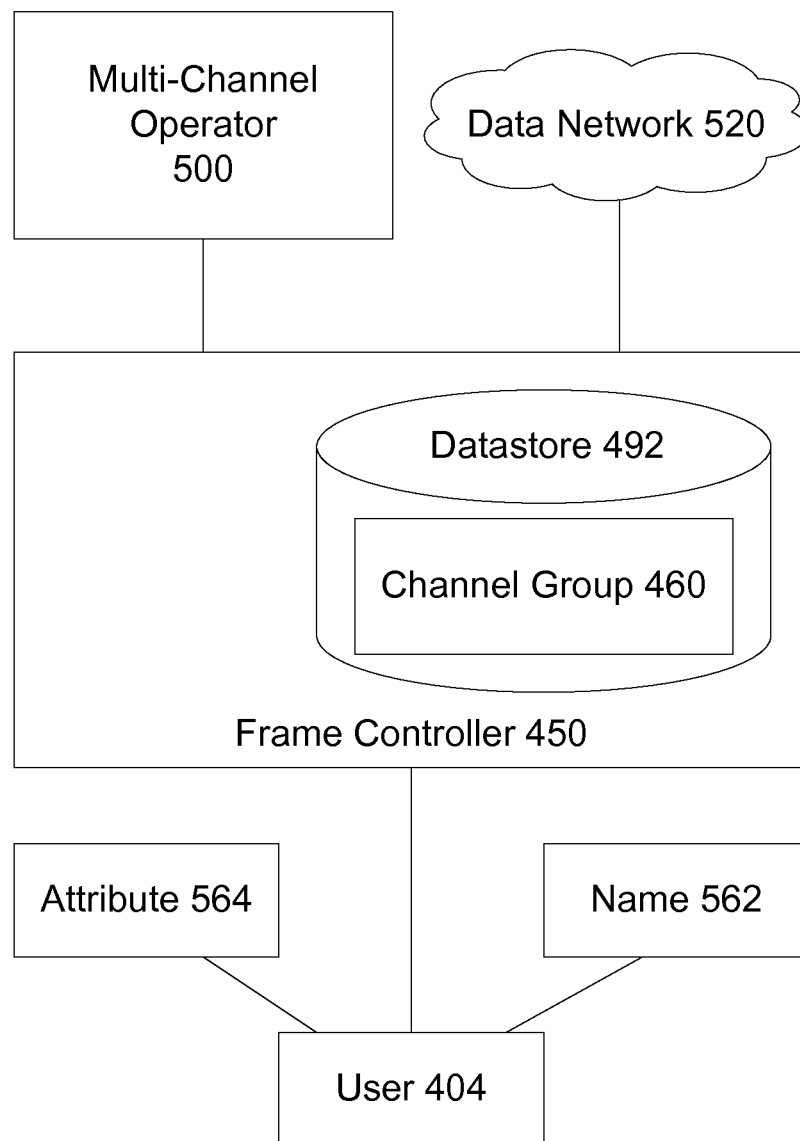


Figure 8

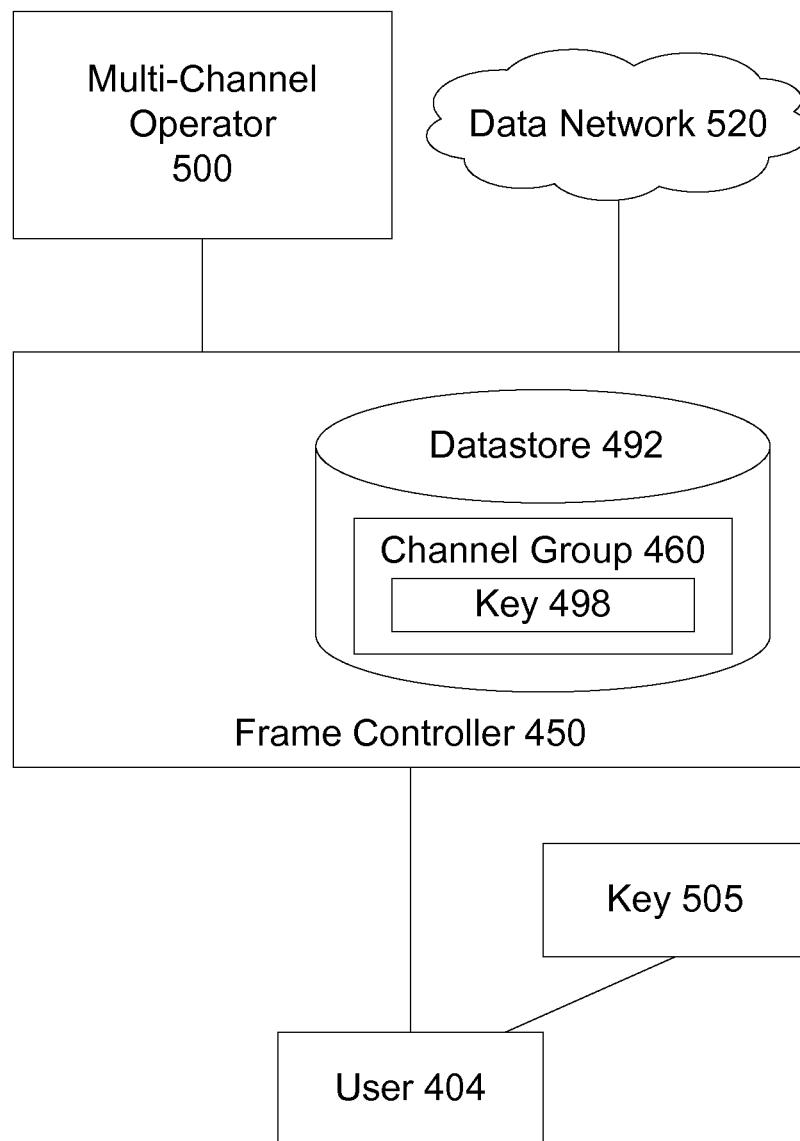


Figure 9

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METHOD AND SYSTEM FOR TELEVISION CHANNEL GROUP

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

The present application is a continuation of co-pending U.S. patent application Ser. No. 11/804,370, filed on May 19, 2007; which in turn is a continuation-in-part of U.S. patent application Ser. No. 11/731,461, filed on Apr. 2, 2007, and issued as U.S. Pat. No. 8,863,187 on Oct. 14, 2014.

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

This invention generally relates to television, and more particularly, to a system and method for organizing television channel groups.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

The introduction of High Definition Television (HDTV) and the flat panel display has led to new and pleasant experience in watching television. The slimness of a flat panel television set saves space and allows a consumer to place a larger television in a room of limited size. HDTV sets support high resolution and better picture quality. Many HDTV sets sold today are flat panel television sets.

Along with the improved resolution and picture quality, the trend in HDTV sales has been towards a general increase in the size of the average television display. For example, in United States, the average size of a HDTV set sold is now approximately 30 inches, diagonal. In some Asian countries, the average size is even larger than 32 inches.

A large screen allows a consumer to more comfortably view multiple pictures. For example, a consumer may watch the Super Bowl on a large picture on the display screen, while simultaneously viewing an NBA game between the Sacramento Kings and the LA Lakers on a smaller picture, a local college basketball between Stanford and Berkeley on a third picture, and a hockey game between New York Islanders and Anaheim Ducks on a fourth picture on the television display. Not to miss any important news, the consumer may view CNN or FOX on a fifth picture. Last but not least, they may also view a sixth picture, such as from a baby monitor their 8-month old baby's room, at the same time. On a traditional smaller television screen, having six picture frames displaying simultaneously on the screen would necessitate that at least some of the picture frames would be so small as to be difficult to view at an average or normal viewing distance. With the large screen, however, more the larger display area allows for more picture detail to be discerned at the same distance than with a smaller television screen.

Currently, there are several ways to view multiple pictures simultaneously on a television set. Picture in picture (PIP) allows two pictures to be shown on a television set at the same time, with a smaller picture displayed on top of, or overlaying, a larger picture. Since the smaller picture overlays the larger picture, the larger picture is not entirely visible. This is often extremely inconvenient, as the overlaid picture may cover a portion of the larger picture of interest to the viewer. For example, the overlaid portion might cover the end zone of a football game.

In addition, many cable television and satellite television networks carry numerous channels. A subscriber typically gets over 50 channels, even for basic services, and it is not uncommon for a subscriber to have over 100 channels available with a typical subscription. Particularly in a multiple

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picture environment, in which the number of channels that can be viewed at one time is increased, a user may desire a means to easily select channels for viewing.

Moreover, advances in Internet video and television potentially makes available thousands of channels. Navigating through so many available channels becomes a daunting task. There are a number of ways to deal with the problem. Video on demand (VOD) allows a user to select a television program they want to watch, but this method is most effective only for a small number of television programs. The next time the user wants to watch television, they have to select a television program again.

Also, VOD relates to television programs and not to television channels. For example, if Mary wants to watch television programs about homes and gardens, she may use VOD to select a "24 Hour Design" show from House and Garden Television channel (HGTV). On the next day, Mary turns on the television to watch some more house and garden shows, but instead of seeing the HGTV channel, she finds a VOD screen waiting for her to once again select a program.

Another way of navigating through the channels is to use the programmed channel list feature of televisions and set-top boxes. A user may remove television channels they do not like. For example, Bob does not shop on television and is not interested in local community affairs. Thus, he removes all home shopping television channels and local community television channels from the programmed channel list. Bob is happy. Mary, Bob's wife, likes to shop but does not enjoy sports on television. Mary removes sports channels from the programmed channel list. Mary finds the home shopping channels were removed, and adds them back to the programmed channel list. Later that evening, Bob wants to watch a tennis final match on ESPN, a sports channel. Bob cannot find it on the programmed channel list.

Thus, particularly in a multiple picture environment, there is a need to organize television channels into a plurality of television channel groups.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

An aspect of the present invention provides a television system and method including an input interface for receiving video data from a plurality of video streams and transferring the video data to a frame controller in communication with a television display. Each of the plurality of video streams has a display aspect ratio, and the frame controller causes the video data from each of the plurality of different video streams to be displayed in a separate frame on the television display. Each frame occupies an area of the television display separate from an area occupied by any other frame. The frame controller further causes display of a channel group comprising a list of channels in at least one of the separate frames on the television display. Each channel includes a plurality of serially-available video streams sharing at least one common attribute.

In another aspect of the invention, the input interface receives video data from one or more sources selected from the list including broadcast television, cable television, satellite television, video cassette player (VCR), and digital versatile disk (DVD).

In one aspect of the invention, the input interface receives video data in one or more of the following formats: NTSC, PAL, and HDTV.

In another aspect of the invention, the input interface includes one or more of a coaxial interface, a radio frequency (RF) interface, a high-definition multimedia interface

(HDMI), component interface, composite interface, an Ethernet interface, or a wireless network interface.

In one aspect of the invention, the input interface includes a wireless network. Any wireless network may be used, including a Wireless Local Area Network (WLAN), a Worldwide Interoperability for Microwave Access (WiMax) network, or and Ultra-wideband (UWB) network.

In another aspect of the invention, the common attribute for the channel group is one of sports, news, or movies.

In another aspect of the invention, the common attribute for the channel group is one of ethnicity, language or culture.

In another aspect of the invention, the common attribute for the channel group is one of age appropriateness, age preference, or age restricted.

In another aspect of the invention, the common attribute for the channel group is selected by a user. In an aspect of the invention, the user selects the common attribute from a list of common attributes.

Another aspect of the invention also allows the user to provide a key to the frame controller and for the frame controller to require the provided key to be used when access to a channel group or to a display channel in the channel group is attempted.

Another aspect of the invention also provides that a key must be verified by the frame controller with a multi-access network or data network in order for access to a channel group or to a display channel in the channel group to be allowed.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

FIG. 1 is a schematic diagram illustrating a television set with a multi-picture frame;

FIG. 1a is a schematic diagram illustrating a picture and a frame controller in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention;

FIG. 2 is a schematic diagram illustrating controlling operations of a multi-picture frame, in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention;

FIG. 2a is a schematic diagram depicting a process to swap the television channel of two displayed pictures, in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention;

FIG. 2b is a schematic diagram depicting a process to change a television channel of a display picture, in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention;

FIG. 3a is a schematic diagram depicting the use of a television channel selection list for selecting a television channel to display, in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention; and

FIG. 3b is a schematic diagram depicting the use of a television channel name list for selecting a television channel to display, in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention.

FIG. 4 is a schematic diagram illustrating a television set displaying a television channel group, in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention;

FIG. 5a is a schematic diagram illustrating a channel group, in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention;

FIG. 5b is a schematic diagram illustrating a channel group, in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention;

FIG. 6 is a schematic diagram illustrating an operation on a channel group, in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention;

FIG. 7 is a schematic diagram illustrating a television set displaying a television channel group, in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention;

FIG. 8 is a schematic diagram depicting a process to configure a channel group, in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention; and

FIG. 9 is a schematic diagram depicting a process to limit access to a channel group, in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

In the following description, for purposes of explanation, specific numbers, materials and configurations are set forth in order to provide a thorough understanding of the invention. It will be apparent, however, to one having ordinary skill in the art, that the invention may be practiced without these specific details. In some instances, well-known features may be omitted or simplified so as not to obscure the present invention. Furthermore, reference in the specification to “one embodiment” or “an embodiment” means that a particular feature, structure or characteristic described in connection with the embodiment is included in at least one embodiment of the invention. The appearances of the phrase “in an embodiment” in various places in the specification are not necessarily all referring to the same embodiment.

The term “video data” referred to in the descriptions of various embodiments of the invention herein described is intended to generally describe electronic audio and video signals containing or incorporating video for display on a television or other video display device. This term is used in the broadest sense as known in the electronic arts, and may include analog and/or digital signals. Likewise, the term “video stream” is used in a non-limiting fashion and generally refers to the collection of video data, together with any carrier signals, data headers or other electronic information, which singularly or taken together allow the described embodiments to operate. For example, a digital video stream from a given video source might include multiple packets of compressed video data, each packet or group thereof having one or more packet headers. Typically, one or more of the headers includes information relating to the video data, such as the compression algorithm used, the aspect ratio, etc.

The term “aspect ratio” referred to in the descriptions of the various embodiments of the invention herein described refers to the ratio of the width of the video display image to the height of the video display image. For most NTSC television display images the current aspect ratio is 4:3. High-definition Television (HDTV) uses an aspect ratio of 16: 9, which is similar to the aspect ratio used by motion pictures. Reference herein to displaying a video stream in a frame having a height and a width proportional to the video stream’s aspect ratio means that an HDTV video stream is displayed filling a frame having a width:height ratio of 16:9. Similarly, a standard NTSC television video stream would be displayed filling a frame having a width:height ratio of 4:3.

As used herein, the terms “picture frame” and “frame” refer to the borders of a displayed picture. Unless otherwise specified, a picture frame does not necessarily have a border of any particular width, i.e., a displayed picture might occupy the entire area of the picture frame, or the picture frame may include a border. Reference to locations on a display device may be made, by referring to either the location of the picture frame or to the location of displayed picture itself, without limitation. Reference to the size of a picture frame refers to the height and width of the frame, and frames differing height are referred to as being of different sizes.

As used herein, the term “picture” refers to the whole of the display image and its picture frame, unless otherwise indicated, without limitation.

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An embodiment of the present invention advantageously provides for the display of multiple pictures on a high resolution large screen television set without overlaying another picture, while preserving the high resolution and aspect ratio of the displayed pictures.

FIG. 1 is a block diagram of a television set **100** displaying a multi-picture frame and a frame controller **150**. Television set **100** is an electronic device that receives and displays images and sounds. In one embodiment, television set **100** receives images and sounds as video data or a video stream from a television channel **131**, which may originate from a broadcast television network, a cable television network, a satellite television network, or Internet Protocol television (IPTV) network. Alternatively, the video data may originate from a VCR, a DVD player, a digital video recorder (DVR), a set top box, or any other video source.

In an embodiment, television set **100** includes a screen capable of displaying a multi-picture frame **120** large enough for a user to comfortably watch multiple pictures from 6 feet away. In one embodiment television set **100** has a screen size of at least 32 inches, or 80 cm. In another embodiment, a user watches television set **100** from 15 feet away, and the screen size is at least 60 inches or 150 cm.

Multi-picture frame **120** includes multiple pictures **121**, **123**, **125**, **127**, **128**, **129**. Picture **128** is a major picture having a display size larger than the smaller pictures **121**, **123**, **125**, **127** and **129**. Multi-picture frame **120** differs from picture-in-picture (PIP) in that a small picture does not overlay over the multi-picture frame **120**. Moreover, large picture **128** does not occupy the full screen, as in a conventional PIP.

In an exemplary embodiment, television set **100** has a screen size of 32 inches diagonal, picture **128** has a size of 22 inches diagonal, and picture **121** has a size of 9 inches diagonal. In another exemplary embodiment, television set **100** has a screen size of 40 inches diagonal, picture **128** has a size of 27 inches diagonal, and picture **121** has a size of 12 inches diagonal. In still another exemplary embodiment, television set **100** has a screen size of 60 inches diagonal, picture **128** has a size of 42 inches diagonal, and picture **121** has a size of 16 inches diagonal.

In various embodiments, picture **128** may have a picture resolution and aspect ratios of NTSC standard, defined by National Television System Committee, Phase Alternating Line (PAL), DVD video, or HDTV. In one embodiment, picture **128** has a better picture resolution than NTSC, PAL or HDTV.

The layout of the multiple pictures depicted in FIG. 1 is exemplary in nature. In various embodiments the number, dimensions and positions of the various pictures or picture frames may differ. For example, in one embodiment the size of large picture **128** is as depicted, but the sizes of the small pictures are different.

FIG. 1a is a block diagram depicting a picture **124** and a frame controller **150**. Picture **124** can be a larger picture **128** or smaller picture **127**, as depicted in FIG. 1. In an embodiment, picture **124** displays images and sounds, i.e., the video signal of television channel **134**. In one embodiment, picture **124** displays cable television channel **34**, or video from a DVD player. Typically different pictures such as picture **123** and picture **129** display different television channels **133** and **139**. For example, in one embodiment, picture **123** displays cable television channel **34**, picture **129** displays broadcast television channel **48**, picture **123** displays satellite television channel **93**, and picture **127** displays a movie from a VCR.

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Referring once again to FIG. 1, in an embodiment of the invention, pictures **121**, **123**, **125**, **127**, **128**, and **129** display television channels **131**, **133**, **135**, **137**, **138** and **139**, respectively.

In one embodiment, television **120** displays the sounds of the largest picture **128** and not of other pictures. Alternatively, in another embodiment, television **120** may display the sounds of picture **129** or of another picture as selected by the user.

Frame controller **150** controls multi-picture frame **120**. In an embodiment, frame controller **150** includes input interface **192** connecting to television channels **131**, **133**, **135**, **137**, **138** and **139**. Input interface **192** may include any of a coaxial interface, a Radio Frequency (RF) interface, a High-Definition Multimedia interface (HDMI), a component interface such as YPbPr or YCbCr interface, a composite interface, an Ethernet interface, or a wireless network interface. Frame controller **150** receives video streams of the said television channels from the input interface **192**.

Frame controller **150** connects to television set **100**. In one embodiment, frame controller **150** includes an output interface **195** connecting to television set **100**. Frame controller **150** sends frame signal **180** for multipicture frame **120** over output interface **195** to television set **100**. In one embodiment, output interface **195** may include an RF interface, an HDMI interface, an S-video interface, a component interface, or a composite interface. Output interface **195** may include a wireless network such as a Wireless Local Area Network (WLAN), a Worldwide Interoperability for Microwave Access (WiMax), or an UltraWideband (UWB) network.

Referring back to FIG. 1a, frame controller **150** includes a tuner **154** handling a video stream or signal for picture **124**. Based on television channel **134** of picture **124**, tuner **154** selects television channel **134** from input interface **192**, receives the video stream or signal **164** of television channel **134**, transforms channel video stream or signal **164** to sub-frame signal **184**.

In FIG. 1, frame controller **150** includes multiple tuners **151**, **153**, **155**, **157**, **158**, **159** corresponding to multiple pictures **121**, **123**, **125**, **127**, **128**, and **129**, accordingly. Tuners **151**, **153**, **155**, **157**, **158** and **159** generate sub-frame signals **181**, **183**, **185**, **187**, **188** and **189**. Frame controller **150** combines sub-frame signals **181**, **183**, **185**, **187**, **188** and **189** into frame signal **180**, and transmits frame signal **180** over output interface **195** to television set **100**. Television set **100** subsequently displays frame signal **180**.

In one embodiment, television set **100** includes the frame controller **150**. In such an embodiment the output interface **195** may be an internal bus or other connection within the television set **100**.

FIG. 2 illustrates controlling operations of a multi-picture frame **120**. In an embodiment of the invention, frame controller **150** controls operations of the multipicture frame **120**, and a user **104** uses a controlling device **106** to instruct frame controller **150**. Frame controller **150** connects to the controlling device **106** through, for example infrared signals, radio signals, or a data network such as Ethernet, WLAN, or WiMax. In alternative embodiments, the controlling device **106** is a remote control, a mobile device such as a cell phone, a personal computer or a laptop.

FIGS. 2a and 2b are block diagrams illustrating picture swapping and changing operations, respectively, in an exemplary embodiment of the invention.

In FIG. 2a, frame controller **150** provides a swap operation **115a** swapping picture **121** with picture **128**. User **104** selects, using controlling device **106**, picture **121** and picture **128**. The user **104** then selects swap operation **115a**. In

response to receiving the swap operation **115a** signal from the controlling device **106**, frame controller **150** informs tuner **151** to transform channel signal **161** to sub-frame signal **181** using a large picture resolution of picture **128**. Frame controller **150** informs tuner **158** to transform channel signal **168** to sub-frame signal **188** using a small picture resolution of picture **121**. When frame controller **150** composes sub-frame signals **181**, **183**, **185**, **187**, **188** and **189**, frame controller **150** places sub-frame signal **188** to the location of picture **121** and sub-frame signal **181** to the location of picture **128**.

The replacement of picture **128** by picture **121** may be performed in several ways. In an embodiment, frame controller **150** informs tuner **158** to select television channel **131**. Tuner **158** receives channel signals **168** from television channel **131**, transforms channel signals **168** to sub-frame signal **188**. In another embodiment, frame controller **150** informs tuner **158** not to transform channel signal **168**. Frame controller **150** informs tuner **151** to transform channel signal **161** to sub-frame signal **188** using picture resolution of picture **128**, in addition to sub-frame signal **181** using current small picture resolution of picture **121**. Frame controller places sub-frame signal **188** to the location of picture **128**.

A user **104** may swap two small pictures, such as picture **123** and picture **125**, rather than swapping a small picture and a large picture.

As depicted in FIG. **2b**, in an embodiment, frame controller **150** provides a change operation **115b** to change a television channel of a displayed picture. In exemplary operation, a user **104** selects picture **125**, which is displaying television channel **135**. Next, user **104** selects the change channel operation **115b** using the controlling device **106**, and further selects another television channel to display. In one embodiment, the user **104** selects the new television channel directly, whereas, in an alternative embodiment, the user **104** selects the next channel in a sequence of channels, or the previous channel, or another video source altogether, such as DVD player. In one embodiment, the user **104** keys in a television channel number or name. Frame controller **150** determines television channel **235** and informs tuner **155** to switch to television channel **235**.

FIGS. **3a** and **3b** illustrate the use of a television channel selection list and a television channel name list, respectively, for selecting a television channel to display.

In one embodiment, frame controller **150** determines the second television channel **235** based on picture **125**. For example, picture **125** may be associated with a pre-determined television channel List **205** for picture **125**. FIG. **3a** illustrates television channel list **205** for picture **125**. Picture **125** is currently displaying television channel **135**. When the user **104** selects the next television channel, frame controller **150** determines the second television channel **235** from television channel list **205** to be cable channel **57**. In another, frame controller **150** connects to a data store **220** that includes television channel list **205**. Frame controller **150** matches picture **125** against datastore **220** and retrieves television channel list **205**.

In another embodiment, frame controller **150** queries a network computing device **222** that includes television channel list **205**. Frame controller **150** sends picture **125** and television channel **135** to computing device **222**. Frame controller **150** obtains television channel **235** from computing device **222**.

In an embodiment, the user **104** specifies television channel **235** by channel name **215**, as depicted in FIG. **3b**. Frame controller **150** matches channel name **215** against television channel name list **207** and retrieves the corresponding television channel **235**. In one embodiment, frame controller **150**

connects a datastore **220** that includes television channel name list **207**. Frame controller **150** matches picture **125** against datastore **220** and retrieves television channel name list **207**.

In another embodiment, frame controller **150** queries a network computing device **222** that includes television channel name list **207**. Frame controller **150** sends picture **125** and channel name **215** to computing device **222**. Frame controller **150** obtains television channel **235** from computing device **222**.

Numerous other operations may be performed by the frame controller **150** as directed by a user **104**. For example, operation **115** can be used to increase or reduce the size of picture **128**. In one embodiment, operation **115** can be to swap the picture whose sounds are audible between picture **123** and picture **128**. In another embodiment, frame controller **150** connects to a recorder such as a DVD recorder, and operation **115** can be used to record television channel **135** of picture **125**. In yet another embodiment, operation **115** can be used to restart a television program of television channel **137** of picture **127**, or to pause, fast forward or fast backward television channel **137** of picture **127**.

A television channel, as used herein, includes the common understanding as a source of serially-available video streams, without limitation.

FIG. **4** illustrates a television set displaying a television channel group. Television set **400** is an electronic device that receives images and sounds. In an embodiment, television set **400** receives images and sounds signals from a television channel **490**, which, in turn, relates to images and sounds signal source **491**. Signal source **491** may be from a broadcast television network, a cable television, network, a satellite television network, an Internet Protocol television (IPTV) network, a VCR, a DVD player, a digital video recorder (DVR), a set top box, or another images and sounds signal source.

Exemplary television set **400** displays a multipicture frame **420**, which includes multiple pictures **421**, **425**, and **428**. In an embodiment of the invention, picture **428** is a major picture having a display size larger than the smaller pictures **421** and **425**. In other embodiments, the layout, size and number of the multiple pictures may be different than shown in the figure.

Multi-picture frame **420** is controlled by frame controller **450**, which includes channel group **460**, which further includes a plurality of channels. Channel group **460** relates to an attribute shared by all channels in the channel group **460**. Multi-picture frame **420** displays channel group **460**, although typically channel group **460** includes more channels than number of pictures that are simultaneously displayed in multi-picture frame **420**. For example, in FIG. **1**, channel group **460** includes channels **461**, **463**, **465**, **468** and **469**. Frame controller **450** displays channel group **460** in multi-picture frame **420**. Frame controller **450** displays channels **461**, **465**, **468** onto pictures **421**, **425**, and **428** respectively. Channels **463** and **469** are not displayed in multi-picture frame **420**.

In an embodiment of the invention, frame controller **450** is included in television set **400**, and connects to television set **100** through an interface, such as an RF interface, a HDMI interface, a S-video interface, a component interface, a composite interface, a network interface, or a wireless network interface such as Wireless Local Area Network (WLAN), Worldwide Interoperability for Microwave Access (WiMax), or an Ultra-Wideband (UWB) network.

An exemplary frame controller **450** may connect to television channel input **490**, such as cable television network, satellite television network, IPTV, Internet, DVD player, or

other video sources. Television channel input **190** may include a plurality of signal sources such as signal source **491**. The frame controller **450** maps channels in channel group **460** to television channel input **490**. In one embodiment, channel group **460** includes the mapping of channels **461**, **463**, **465**, **468** and **469** to their corresponding signal sources in television channel input **490**. Typically channel group **460** includes fewer channels than the number of signal sources in television channel input **490**.

In a typical embodiment, a user **404** interacts with the frame controller **450** to instruct an operation onto channel group **460**.

FIG. **5a-5b** illustrates channel group **460**. In one embodiment, channel group **460** relates to a common theme. Channels **461**, **463**, **465**, **468** and **469** relate to the theme. For example, channel group **460a** relates to sports; channel group **460b** relates to news; channel group **460c** relates to movies.

In another embodiment, channel group **460** relates to an ethnic culture. Channels **461**, **463**, **465**, **468** and **469** relate to the ethnic culture. For example, channel group **460d** relates to Chinese channels; channel group **460e** relates to Latin American channels.

In another embodiment, channel group **460** relates to an age group. Channels **461**, **463**, **465**, **468** and **469** relate to the age group. For example channel group **460f** relates to channels appropriate for children; channel group **460g** relates to channels appropriate for seniors; and channel group **460h** relates to channels having mature content for adults.

In another embodiment, to common attributes shared by channel group **460** relates all channels included in channel group **460**. Channel groups are well-suited to include channels having one or more common attributes. For example, exemplary channel groups mentioned herein include common attributes: a sports channel group sharing the sports attribute, a news channel group sharing the news attribute, a movie channel group sharing the movie attribute, a Chinese channel group sharing a Chinese language and/or culture attribute, etc. There are numerous attributes about which channel groups may be formed, all of which are not enumerated herein.

In one embodiment, the user **404** may specify the common attributes by inputting it. In another embodiment, the user **404** may select the common attribute from a list.

FIG. **6** illustrates an operation on a channel group. Frame controller **450** controls operations of multipicture frame **420**. User **404** uses a controlling device **406** to instruct frame controller **450**. Frame controller **450** connects to controlling device **406** through for example infrared signals, radio signals, or a data network such as Ethernet, WLAN, or WiMax. In one embodiment, controlling device **406** is a remote control, a mobile device such as a cell phone, a personal computer or a laptop.

In an embodiment, the user **404** selects picture **421** and selects a second channel **431**. The user **404** may then select the next channel. Frame controller **450** determines second channel **431** based on channel group **460** and channel **461**. In another embodiment, channel **463** is the next channel after channel **461** in channel group **460**. Frame controller **450** determines second channel **431** to be channel **463**.

In an embodiment, the user **404** selects the previous channel. Frame controller **450** determines second channel **431** to be channel **469** as channel **469** is the previous channel of channel **461** in channel group **460**. Frame controller **450** then displays second channel **431** onto picture **421**.

In another embodiment, the user **404** selects picture **425** or picture **428** before selecting second channel **431**. In this

embodiment, frame controller **450** may determine the second channel **431** based on the selected picture.

In another embodiment, the user **404** selects second channel **431** by specifying a channel name or a channel number. The frame controller **450** matches the specified channel name or channel number against channel group **460** and sets second channel **431** to a matched channel in channel group **460**.

FIG. **7** illustrates an exemplary operation to change to a second channel group. The frame controller **450** includes a channel group list **454**, which includes a plurality of channel groups, particularly channel group **460** and channel group **462**. The user **404** selects channel group **462** to be displayed on multi-picture frame **420**. In one embodiment, user **404** selects a next- channel group, and the frame controller **450** matches the channel group **160** against the channel group list **454**, and determines channel group **462** as the next channel group after channel group **460**. In another embodiment, the user **404** selects a previous channel group, and frame controller **450** matches channel group **460** against channel group list **454** and determines channel group **462** as the previous channel group before channel group **460**. In another embodiment, the user **404** selects a name or a number. Frame controller **450** matches the selected name or number against channel group list **454** and determines channel group **462** as a matched channel group in channel group list **454**.

After determining channel group **462**, frame controller **450** displays channel group **462** to multi-picture frame **420**. Channel group **462** includes channels **471**, **473**, **478** and **479**. In one embodiment, frame controller **450** displays channel **471** onto picture **421**, channel **473** onto picture **425**, and channel **479** onto picture **428**. In one embodiment, frame controller **450** randomly displays channels in channel group **462** onto pictures in multi-picture frame **420**. In another embodiment, channel group **462** includes a display list **467** between channels in channel group **462** and pictures in multi-picture frame **420**. The frame controller **450** then displays based on the display list **467**.

FIG. **8** illustrates an exemplary process to configure a channel group. In one embodiment, frame controller **450** includes a datastore **492**. Datastore **492** includes channel group **460**. In another embodiment, channel group **460** is pre-determined by a manufacturer. In one embodiment, channel group **460** is pre-determined by a retailer selling frame controller **450**. In one embodiment, frame controller **450** connects to a multi-channel operator **500**. Multi-channel operator **500** provides television channel input **490**. In one embodiment multi-channel operator **500** is a cable television network operator, a satellite television network operator, a broadcast television network operator, Internet television provider, or an IPTV network operator. Frame controller **450** obtains channel group **460** from multichannel operator **500**.

In another embodiment, connects to a data network **520**. Frame controller **450** obtains channel group **460** from data network **520**. In one embodiment, frame controller **450** connects to multi-channel operator **500** using data network **520**. In another embodiment, frame controller **450** obtains channel group **460** from an Internet web site where data network **520** includes Internet.

User **404** selects name **562**, and frame controller **450** queries the multi-channel operator **500** and obtains channel group **460**, using the user-selected name **562**. In another embodiment, frame controller **450** queries data network **520** for channel group **460**, using name **562**.

In another one embodiment, user **404** selects an attribute **564**, and the frame controller **450** queries multichannel operator **500** using attribute **564** to obtain channel group **460**. In

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another embodiment, frame controller 450 queries data network 520 using attribute 564 for channel group 460.

In another embodiment, the user 404 creates channel group 460, such as by specifying a name or number for the channel group 460. In one embodiment, user 404 specifies a common attribute for channel group 460. The user 404 specifies channels 461, 463, 465, 468 and 469 to be included in channel group 460. The frame controller 450 stores the created channel group 460 into datastore 492.

In another embodiment, the frame controller 450 modifies an existing channel group 460 by including channel 461 into channel group 460. In one embodiment, frame controller 450 obtains channel 461 from data network 520. Alternatively, frame controller 450 may obtain channel 461 from the user 404, or from another source.

In an embodiment, the frame controller 450 removes channel 463 from channel group 460. Frame controller 450 may determine to remove channel 463 from information obtained through data network 520, or by instruction from user 404.

FIG. 9 illustrates an exemplary process to limit access to a channel group. In one embodiment, channel group 460 includes a key 498. When user 404 selects channel group 460, user 404 provides a key 505 to the frame controller 450. The frame controller 450 then matches the key 505 against key 498, and allows user 404 to access channel group 460 if there is a match. In another embodiment, access to a channel within channel group 460 is controlled by the frame controller 450 using the keys 505, 498.

In an embodiment, frame controller 420 sends a key 505 to multi-channel operator 500 or data network 520 to verify the key 505 before allowing user 405 to access channel group 460.

In an embodiment, channel group 460 relates to adult content, and key 498 prevents children from accessing channel group 460. In another embodiment, channel group 460 relates to premium content, and the user 404 obtains the key 505 and uses it to access channel group 460. In various embodiments, the user 404 obtains the key 505 from a multichannel operator 500, a merchant, or from data network 520.

Although the invention herein has been described with reference to particular embodiments, it is to be understood that these embodiments are merely illustrative of the principles and applications of the present invention. It is therefore to be understood that numerous modifications may be made to the illustrative embodiments and that other arrangements may be devised without departing from the spirit and scope of the present invention as defined by the appended claims.

What is claimed is:

1. A television system, comprising:

an input interface for receiving video data from a plurality of video streams; and

a frame controller causing the video data to be displayed in a plurality of pictures on a display coupled to the television system, each picture occupying an area of the display separate from an area occupied by any other picture, the frame controller further:

receives a first user selection to display a video group related to an attribute, the video group comprising at least a first video stream and a second video stream of the plurality of video streams;

receives the first and the second video streams of the video group from the input interface;

displays the first and the second video streams in a first picture and a second picture of the plurality of pictures;

receives a second user selection to change the display in a given picture of the plurality of pictures to a given

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video stream of the video group, wherein the given video stream is not currently displayed on the display; and

displays the given video stream in the given picture.

2. The television system of claim 1, wherein the first and the second pictures are of different sizes.

3. The television system of claim 1, wherein the frame controller further receives the first user selection or the second user selection from a mobile computing device over a wireless data network.

4. The television system of claim 1, wherein the attribute comprises one or more of the following: sports; news; movies; live events; appropriateness for children; and an age group.

5. The television system of claim 1, wherein the input interface receives at least some of the video data from Internet.

6. The television system of claim 1, wherein the frame controller further receives a third user selection to change the display to a second video group comprising a second plurality of video streams.

7. The television system of claim 6, wherein the frame controller further displays the second plurality of video streams in the plurality of pictures on the display.

8. The television system of claim 1, wherein the frame controller further receives a user instruction to create a second video group comprising a second plurality of video streams.

9. The television system of claim 8, wherein the user instruction comprises a second attribute related to the second video group.

10. The television system of claim 9, further comprising a datastore, wherein the frame controller further stores the second video group and the second attribute in the datastore.

11. The television system of claim 10, wherein the frame controller further:

receives a third user selection to display the second video group;

obtains the second video group from the datastore; and

displays the second plurality of video streams of the second

video group in the plurality of pictures on the display.

12. The television system of claim 1, wherein the frame controller further queries a data network to obtain the video group using the attribute.

13. A method for displaying video data from a plurality of video streams on a display, the method comprising:

receiving, by a frame controller of a television system, video data from the plurality of video streams; and

displaying, by the frame controller, the video data in a plurality of pictures on the display coupled to the television system, each picture occupying an area of the display separate from an area occupied by any other picture, the displaying comprising:

receiving a first user selection to display a video group related to an attribute, the video group comprising at least a first video stream and a second video stream of the plurality of video streams;

receiving the first and the second video streams of the video group;

displaying the first and the second video streams in a first picture and a second picture of the plurality of pictures;

receiving a second user selection to change the display in a given picture of the plurality of pictures to a given video stream of the video group, wherein the given video stream is not currently displayed on the display; and

displaying the given video stream in the given picture.

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14. The method of claim **13**, wherein the first and the second pictures are of different sizes.

15. The method of claim **13**, wherein the displaying further comprises: receiving the first user selection or the second user selection from a mobile computing device over a wireless data network.

16. The method of claim **13**, wherein the attribute comprises one or more of the following: sports; news; movies; live events; appropriateness for children; and an age group.

17. The method of claim **13**, wherein at least some of the video data is received from Internet.

18. The method of claim **13**, further comprising: receiving a third user selection to change the display to a second video group comprising a second plurality of video streams.

19. The method of claim **18**, further comprising: displaying the second plurality of video streams in the plurality of pictures on the display.

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20. The method of claim **13**, further comprising: receiving a user instruction to create a second video group comprising a second plurality of video streams.

21. The method of claim **20**, wherein the user instruction comprises a second attribute related to the second video group.

22. The method of claim **21**, further comprising: storing the second video group and the second attribute in a datastore.

23. The method of claim **22**, further comprising: receiving a third user selection to display the second video group; obtaining the second video group from the datastore; and displaying the second plurality of video streams of the second video group in the plurality of pictures on the display.

24. The method of claim **13**, further comprising: querying a data network to obtain the video group using the attribute.

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